

Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations

A peer-reviewed e-journal of the Council of Centers on Jewish-Christian Relations

Published by the Center for Christian-Jewish Learning at Boston College

“Heart-Rending Ambivalence”: Jacques Maritain and the Complexity of Postwar Catholic Philosemitism

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Volume 6 (2011)

<http://ejournals.bc.edu/ojs/index.php/scjr>

The author would like to express his gratitude to Bernard Doering, Jonathan Judaken, Paul Mazgaj, Brenna Moore, and the anonymous peer reviewers of this article for their thoughtful and helpful comments and suggestions.

Introduction

The most important thing that the young philosopher Jacques Maritain (1882-1973) learned from his godfather, novelist Léon Bloy, was that “there is but one sadness—not to be a saint.”¹ This was around 1906. For the next six and a half decades of his life, Maritain embraced a quest for sanctity at the core of his vocation as a French Catholic intellectual. A “veritable mountain of letters” divided between the Maritain archives in France and the United States offers a measure of the earthly results of this preoccupation.² We can glimpse at one such letter, written in 1941 by a Columbia University philosophy professor named Ruth Nanda Anshen: “You are the Saint, the miracle and the hope of man in our dark and suffering age.”³ More recently, in February 2011, the Catholic blogosphere came alive to the rumor—at this writing still a rumor—that the beatification process would soon begin for Maritain and his wife Raïssa.⁴

Maritain also has been lauded for his sometimes courageous attempts, beginning in the 1930s and reaching a crescendo during the Holocaust, to confront anti-Jewish prejudice within the consciousness of Christians and the teachings

of the Catholic Church. Writing in 1947, he identified antisemitism as first and foremost a Christian problem: “Before being a problem of blood, of physical life and death for Jews, antisemitism is a problem of the spirit, of spiritual life and death for Christians.”⁵ Today’s reader might detect in this statement little more than a “Christianization of the Holocaust.”⁶ But one also might discern a decisive change underway in how post-Auschwitz Christians began to see the question of Jewish identity and survival in the modern world, not only rethinking the modern Jewish Question through contemplating Christian guilt and atonement, but also confronting a longstanding and not-yet-repudiated “teaching of contempt.”⁷

Maritain has long been identified as a key figure behind the Christian reappraisal of Jews and Judaism after 1945, and the Roman Catholic reengagement with the modern world and

¹ Jacques Maritain, introduction to *Léon Bloy: Pilgrim of the Absolute*, ed. Raïssa Maritain, trans. John Coleman and Harry Lorin Binsse (New York: Pantheon, 1947), 23.

² “Edith Stein is a canonized saint of the Church. Jacques Maritain and his wife spent their lives in the pursuit of sanctity. In the eyes of many, they achieved it. Jacques’ influence on hundreds of souls is recorded in a veritable mountain of letters.” Ralph McInerney, *The Very Rich Hours of Jacques Maritain: A Spiritual Life* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), 3.

³ Letter, Ruth Nanda Anshen to Jacques Maritain, October 25, 1941, Maritain Archives, Kolbsheim.

⁴ Cf. “Sainthood for Jacques & Raïssa Maritain,” February 16, 2011, <http://catholiceye.blogspot.com/2011/02/sainthood-for-jacques-raïssa.html> (accessed August 26, 2011).

⁵ Jacques Maritain, “Lettre à la Conférence du Seelisberg,” in Maritain, *Le Mystère d’Israël et autres essais* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1965), 226. The text of the “Address to the Churches” that emerged from the conference, intended to “prevent any animosity toward the Jews which might arise from false, inadequate or mistaken presentations or conception of the teaching and preaching of the Christian doctrine...and...to promote brotherly love toward the sorely-tried people of the old covenant,” can be found in *The Holocaust and the Christian World*, ed. Carol Rittner, Stephen D. Smith, and Irena Steinfeldt (New York, 2000), 245-46.

⁶ Bernard H. Rosenberg and Chaim Z. Rozwaski, *Contemplating the Holocaust* (Northvale, NJ: Aronson, 1999), 7-16; “ADL Says Canonization of Edith Stein is an Unnecessary Problem,” October 8, 1998, http://www.adl.org/PresRele/VaticanJewish_96/3248_96.asp (accessed June 15, 2011); James Carroll, *Constantine’s Sword: The Church and the Jews, A History* (Boston: Mariner Books, 2002), 5-12. For a nuanced and systematic discussion of the Holocaust as a site for “the ascription of theological import to Jewish life and death,” see Stephen R. Haynes, *Reluctant Witnesses: Jews and the Christian Imagination* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 120-40.

⁷ The seminal text that traces the genealogy of Christian labeling of Jews as “Christ-killers,” or a “deicide people,” is Jules Isaac, *The Teaching of Contempt: Christian Roots of Anti-Semitism*, trans. Helen Weaver (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1964).

the Second Vatican Council in the early 1960s. France's preeminent Catholic intellectual between the wars,⁸ and a professor at Paris' *Institut catholique*, he had converted to Catholicism in 1906, along with his wife Raïssa, a Russian-Jewish émigré, and her sister Véra. All three found themselves exiles in New York between 1940 and 1944. Maritain then served as French ambassador to the Vatican between 1945 and 1948, before teaching at Princeton University until his retirement in 1952. A renowned exponent of the teachings of Saint Thomas Aquinas, Maritain also devoted considerable energies to the promotion of democracy and human rights.⁹

Although reflecting on the Jewish Question by no means constituted his main preoccupation, Maritain engaged in an early, sustained campaign against antisemitism, starting in the 1930s. In 1997, France's Catholic bishops, issuing a Declaration of Repentance at the former internment camp at Drancy, cited him as a prophetic voice: "Why is it, in the debates which we know took place, that the Church did not listen to the better

⁸ Maritain's role in interwar French culture and politics has been examined in detail in several recent monographs: Guillaume de Thieulloy, *Le Chevalier de l'Absolu: Jacques Maritain entre mystique et politique* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2005); Stephen Schloesser, *Jazz Age Catholicism: Mystic Modernism in Postwar Paris, 1919-1933* (Buffalo, NY: University of Toronto Press, 2005); Philippe Chenaux, *Entre Maurras et Maritain. Une génération intellectuelle catholique (1920-1930)* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1999). Earlier, indispensable biographically-based studies include Jean-Luc Barré, *Jacques et Raïssa Maritain: Les mendiants du Ciel*. (Paris: Stock, 1995); and Bernard E. Doering, *Jacques Maritain and the French Catholic Intellectuals* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983).

⁹ James V. Schall, *Jacques Maritain: The Philosopher in Society* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998), 210. As Samuel Moyn states, Maritain sought to convince his fellow Catholics that "human rights, far from being a dangerous outgrowth of modern secular liberalism, recalled the moral community of Christendom through its emphasis on the 'human person.'" *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press/Harvard University Press, 2010), 76. See also Jacques Maritain, *The Rights of Man and Natural Law*, trans. Doris C. Anson (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943).

claim of its members' voices? Before the war, both in articles and lectures, Jacques Maritain tried to open Christians up to different perspectives on the Jewish people."¹⁰ Historians have echoed this praise, describing Maritain as exemplifying a "militant humanism that excluded all forms of totalitarianism and refuted all justifications of antisemitism,"¹¹ or less effusively, as "one of the several Catholic intellectuals renovating their faith in the direction of friendly condescension rather than hateful contempt for the Jewish people."¹²

However nuanced some scholarly appraisals appear to be, these and other prevailing interpretations of Maritain's efforts to eradicate antisemitism from the Christian conscience simplify this thinker's motivations and ideas, if not the ambiguities inherent in philosemitism itself. "Philosemitism" in its most basic usage denotes what one historian, Alan T. Levenson, terms "*any* pro-Jewish or pro-Judaic utterance or act."¹³ Even this general a definition indicates a sentiment that exceeds mere anti-antisemitism, and defies simplification as a polar opposite of antisemitism. Arguably, philosemites and antisemites have both tended to essentialize the Jewish object of their admiration or antipathy, with occasional, sometimes troubling

¹⁰ Catholic Bishops of France, "Declaration of Repentance," September 30, 1997, www.bc.edu/research/cjl/meta-elements/texts/documents/catholic/french_repentance.htm (accessed February 10, 2005).

¹¹ Michel Winock, *La France et les Juifs de 1789 à nos jours* (Paris: Éditions de Seuil, 2004), 214.

¹² Samuel Moyn, *A Holocaust Controversy: The Treblinka Affair in Postwar France* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2005), 72.

¹³ Alan T. Levenson, *Between Philosemitism and Antisemitism: Defenses of Jews and Judaism in Germany, 1871-1932* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), xii. Philosemitism can also be associated with "an intricate ambivalence, combining elements of admiration and disdain," according to the editors of a new volume on the history of philosemitism: Introduction to *Philosemitism in History*, eds. Jonathan Karp and Adam Sutcliffe (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 3.

overlap between two seemingly disparate modern phenomena.¹⁴

Keeping in mind the historically-contingent and often ambivalent nature of philosemitism, this article will incorporate Maritain's postwar writings on the Jewish Question and his interactions with Popes Pius XII and Paul VI, Anglican theologian James Parkes, Jewish historians Léon Poliakov and Jules Isaac, and fellow Catholic writers Paul Claudel and François Mauriac. Maritain saw the Jewish Question as forever transformed by the Shoah, or as he put it, the Passion of Israel: all Christians needed to reevaluate relations with Jews and portrayals of Judaism.¹⁵ But this reevaluation also meant grappling with fundamental (and interconnected) ecclesiological and christological questions, as well as historical questions about the roots of modern antisemitism.

The Shoah as “Passion of Israel”

Maritain's postwar reflections on the Jewish Question comprise a late stage in what Pierre Vidal-Naquet has called a “parcours,”¹⁶ or journey, that began in the first decade of the twentieth century, following closely the trajectory of political and religious change in modern France. This itinerary included a remarkable, and for many of his fellow French Catholics,

¹⁴ For example, Samuel Moyn analyzes philosemitism as a “cultural code” to “argue that philosemitism shared some of the same ground with antisemitism [in post-1945 France], and what matters are the various functions both played.” “Antisemitism, philosemitism, and the rise of Holocaust memory,” *Patterns of Prejudice* 43 (1) (2009), 3.

¹⁵ Richard Francis Crane, *Passion of Israel: Jacques Maritain, Catholic Conscience, and the Holocaust* (Scranton, PA: University of Scranton Press, 2010).

¹⁶ Pierre Vidal-Naquet, “Jacques Maritain et les Juifs. Réflexions sur un parcours,” in Jacques Maritain, *L'impossible antisémitisme, précédé de Jacques Maritain et les Juifs par Pierre Vidal-Naquet* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2003), 7-57.

influential, turning away from integral nationalism and antimodern intransigence toward democratic pluralism and outspoken philosemitism. Maritain's views underwent important changes from the publication of his first essay on the Jewish Question in 1921, in which he decried the negative influence of “Jewish intrigues” in the modern world, to his second one in 1937, in which he pronounced the very impossibility of antisemitic prejudice for faithful Christians.¹⁷

Maritain never succumbed to outright antisemitism himself, but during the 1920s, particularly during the time when he still associated with the monarchist Action Française, he repeatedly venerated “true Israelites” and castigated “carnal Jews.”¹⁸ He also showed a willingness to associate with all but the most vicious antisemites. After the 1926 papal condemnation of Charles Maurras' movement and his writings, however, Maritain increasingly rejected the precepts of the extreme right, including its often virulent antisemitism. His growing enthusiasm for pluralistic democracy—influenced in a positive sense by his Christian personalism and in a negative sense by the rising fascist threat—helped him articulate a more coherent position of uncompromising opposition to racist antisemitism by the late-1930s.¹⁹

The “primacy of the spiritual” that guided Maritain's break with Maurras also guided his framing of the Jewish Question and accounts for a certain ambivalence in his philosemitism, largely expressed theologically.²⁰ In

¹⁷ Crane, 7-33.

¹⁸ See Jacques Maritain, “À propos de la question juive,” in *L'impossible antisémitisme*, especially 63-4, 68.

¹⁹ Crane, 35-49.

²⁰ One historian emphasizes the practical limitations of Maritain's primarily theological approach to the Jewish Question, citing “lingering concerns about the practical utility of the eminent philosopher's ruminations on the heady events of interwar and wartime Europe,” though also acknowledging the “bold, courageous, and indeed prophetic” aspects of his “theological apprecia-

"*L'impossible antisémitisme*," (1937) Maritain identified Jews (at least in a corporate, mystical sense) as obstinately and fatally bound to the world.²¹ During the wartime years, he wrote of a "forgetful people" finally being made aware of their true Messiah through undergoing the unthinkable.²² For Maritain, Jewish mass death assumed an unbearably horrific yet hopefully redemptive part of a Christian metanarrative. But his understanding of this trauma in the very midst of its unfolding did not rely solely on Christian sources, be they Saint Paul's enunciation of the "mystery of Israel,"²³ or his early mentor Bloy's "apocalyptic fulminations."²⁴ Maritain acknowledged

tion of the intimate relationship between the Jewish people and Christianity." Robert A. Ventresca, "Jacques Maritain and the Jewish Question: Theology, Identity, and Politics," *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 2 (2) (2007): 66.

²¹ Jacques Maritain, "L'impossible antisémitisme," in *L'impossible antisémitisme*, 76-78.

²² Jacques Maritain, "On Anti-Semitism," *Christianity and Crisis*, October 6, 1941, in *Oeuvres Complètes, Volume VIII* (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires, 1989), 572.

²³ Rom 11: 11-27. See also Jacques Maritain, *Saint Paul*, trans. Harry Lorin Binnse (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 1-9, 78-88; idem, "The Mystery of Israel," in *Ransoming the Time*, trans. Harry Lorin Binnse (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941), 141-79.

²⁴ Doering, 5. Brenna Moore has written an insightful article that examines the early attempts of Bloy, Raïssa Maritain, and poet Charles Péguy to revise anti-Jewish stereotypes within the French Catholic milieu: "Building a New Tribe in the Gathering Storm: Jews and Judaism in the French Catholic Revival (1900-1945)," *The Catholic Historical Review*, forthcoming. See also Paul Chenaux, "Léon Bloy et sa postérité," in *Juifs et Chrétiens: entre ignorance, hostilité et rapprochement*, eds. Annette Becker, Danielle Delmaire, and Frédéric Gugelot (Lille: Université Charles-de-Gaulle-Lille 3, 2002), Some scholars have posited a pernicious influence of Bloy upon his godson. For an indictment of Bloy as "one of the most extreme and vociferous anti-Semites of turn-of-the-century France," see John Hellman, "The Jews in the 'New Middle Ages': Jacques Maritain's Anti-Semitism in its Times," in *Jacques Maritain and the Jews*, ed. Robert Royal (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 91. For Arthur Cohen, Bloy and Maritain "were clearly philosemites but only up to the possibility of the conversion of the Jews." See "The Holocaust and Christian Theology: An Interpretation of the Problem," in *Judaism and Christianity Under the Impact of National Socialism*, eds. Otto Duv

Jewish influences, including writer Maurice Samuel's diagnosis of antisemitism as "Christophobia," and his close friend painter Marc Chagall's evocative, haunting series of Crucifixion paintings.²⁵

Even if he drew in part on Jewish sources, Maritain's wartime reading of what we today call the Holocaust as "mass crucifixion" undeniably has problematic, controversial aspects. But his attempt to find redemptive meaning through suffering and sacrifice also entailed transforming Christian prejudices toward Jews as alleged Christ-killers. Writing in the *Jewish Frontier* in 1944, he denounced the term "deicide race," demanding that "Christian teachers...purify carefully their language."²⁶ Maritain echoed this sentiment in private to Father John Oesterreicher, later a drafter of *Nostra Aetate*, Vatican II's declaration redefining Catholic relations with Jews: "I think that in these days of the passion of Israel, we need to speak of the mystery of its faux-pas in a language sufficiently renewed for not running the risk of causing any injury and in order to keep divine things from getting mixed up in the human mélange."²⁷

Maritain's spiritual assessment of Jewish vocation nonetheless maintained a connection between divinity and humanity. "I believe that the particular vocation of the Jewish people, dispersed among nations," he explained to a predominately Jewish audience in New York, "has been to activate and

Kulka and Paul R. Mendes-Flohr (Jerusalem: Historical Society of Israel and Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 1987), 479-80.

²⁵ Crane, 80-81, 84-85

²⁶ Jacques Maritain, "The Christian Teaching of the Story of the Crucifixion," in *The Range of Reason*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), available at www2.nd.edu/Departments/Maritain/etext/range10.htm (accessed January 30, 2007).

²⁷ Jacques Maritain to John Oesterreicher, July 23, 1943, Monsignor John Oesterreicher Papers, Archives and Special Collections Center, Seton Hall University.

prod earthly history through that passion for justice, that thirst to have God here below, which is deep-rooted in the heart of Israel." "The Jewish people are," he continued "both the goad and the scapegoat of the world, which revenges itself upon them for the stimulus it receives from them."²⁸ Maritain still believed in a Jewish inclination to unsettle the world, even if he now sanctified this mission, and identified with it. To the Swiss theologian Abbé Charles Journet he expressed his doubts that the world had finished revenging itself upon Jews, writing the following at the end of 1944: "If there is anything that I literally cannot bear, that kills me, it is this antisemitism that still brews and doubtless will continue to grow. ...I feel I have become wedded to the destiny of Israel, and it seems that I will henceforth be a wandering Jew, without a rock on which to rest my head. Spiritually, the exile is not over."²⁹

Maritain, the Vatican, and Postwar Antisemitism

Rome comprised the next stage in Maritain's exile, as he assumed the post of France's ambassador to the Vatican.

²⁸ Jacques Maritain, "The Healing of Humanity," undated manuscript, JM 4/02a, Jacques Maritain Center, University of Notre Dame. These reflections were edited out of the published version of his address: Jacques Maritain, "World Trial: Its Meaning for the Future," *Contemporary Jewish Record* 6 (August 1943), 339-47.

²⁹ *Journet-Maritain Correspondance, Volume III, 1940-1949* (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires, 1998), 293. When Maritain describes himself as "a wandering Jew, without a rock on which to rest my head," he is citing Raïssa's 1939 poem "Chagall," and not for the first time, as he reproduced part of the poem in an earlier essay:

"Poor Jews from everywhere are walking

No one claiming them

They have no place on the earth

To rest—not a stone

The wandering Jews..."

Jacques Maritain, "The Mystery of Israel," in *Ransoming the Time*, trans. Harry Lorin Binsse (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941), 178.

The head of France's provisional government, General Charles de Gaulle, appraising the unsettled state of France after the Liberation, and the extent of French Catholic complicity in Vichy's National Revolution, wanted an eminent, untainted Catholic at the Holy See. The philosopher, whom de Gaulle addressed as *mon maître*, had condemned Vichy since 1940, but avoided London as well, suspecting the General of authoritarianism. Though de Gaulle made his wishes known over dinner at the Waldorf Astoria in July 1944, Maritain wanted to return to philosophy.³⁰ *The Person and the Common Good*, a short work, would appear a few months later. Maritain's most significant study since *Integral Humanism* a decade earlier, it showed the extent to which war and genocide had marked his thinking, identifying the materialism behind a "purely biological conception of society" as leading to the cheapening of human life, and a tendency, evident even in liberal democracies, "to disregard the human person in one way or another and in its place, consider willingly or not, the material individual alone."³¹ After his American exile, Maritain dreaded further diversions.

But to a mind attuned to sacrifice, both as a devout Catholic and as a patriotic Frenchman haunted by the two world wars, Maritain felt undeniable guilt. He admitted to his former student Yves Simon that while he saw in the Rome appointment a "sacrifice which I dread horribly," it was "impossible to continue to shirk one's duty in such times."³² Agreeing to a three year stint,³³ he consoled himself that this "mission

³⁰ Charles Blanchet, "Jacques Maritain, 1940-1944: le refus de la défaite et ses relations avec le général de Gaulle," *Cahiers Jacques Maritain* 16-17 (1988): 39-58.

³¹ Jacques Maritain, *The Person and the Common Good*, trans. John J. Fitzgerald (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1948), 48, 64-66.

³² Letter, Jacques Maritain to Yves Simon, January 8, 1945, in *Cahiers Jacques Maritain* 4 bis: 13.

³³ Julie Kernan, *Our Friend, Jacques Maritain: A Personal Memoir* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), 145-46.

*temporaire*³⁴ would only slightly postpone his full-time resumption of the philosopher's craft. Some of the more conservative figures in the Vatican, such as Undersecretary of State Monsignor Domenico Tardini, shared this consolation.³⁵ Even though de Gaulle only expected of Maritain, accredited in May 1945, a symbolic presence, the ambassador chafed at his post from the beginning. He described his appointment to philosopher Mortimer Adler as a form of "penance," feeling "horribly deprived of intellectual leave and philosophical meditation."³⁶ To novelist Georges Bernanos he complained about the "depressing and suffocating" Roman summer climate.³⁷ Nonetheless, the new ambassador did more than perform perfunctory, even if interminable, duties. At the end of 1945, he addressed himself to the German guilt question.

Maritain's report for the French Foreign Office built on previous judgments he had formed of German national character going back to the Great War, Luther having long instilled in his people a "swollen consciousness of self...essentially a consciousness of will."³⁸ The Nazi war against the Jews only

intensified this antagonism, Maritain indicting Germandom for finding "its temporal sacrament in Thor or Odin, or in Luther and Hitler," and receiving hellish inspiration to fashion "the most perfect machinery of murder and of death."³⁹ The collapse of the Third Reich and the full revelation of mass atrocities made Maritain only more adamant that there was something deeply deformed in the German character: "Let us not speak of Nazi fanatics; suffice to say that the German people as a whole accepted Hitler and the demonic principle that he represented as a convenient tool to be made use of for the grandeur of Germany, and that it hoped for the victory over the world of a regime that accumulated crimes against the natural law."⁴⁰ The writer of these words understood that he was portraying the German people as collectively irredeemable, or very nearly so. Cutting to the heart of the matter, Maritain denounced (as if it needed to be ruled out) "the extermination or the mass resettlement of the German people."⁴¹

Was Maritain seriously considering a Final Solution for defeated Germany? In deductive logic reminiscent of Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*, Maritain asserted that no, on the contrary, the German people had to be capable of some kind of spiritual renewal, starting with a confrontation with collective guilt. Otherwise, "the anti-Christian theory of a racial curse would also hold true for the Germans."⁴² The challenge here addresses itself explicitly to one element of modern antisemitism, Nazi racism, and implicitly to another element, Christian anti-Judaism. Maritain evidently did not know that at least one German thinker, philosopher Karl Jaspers, took very seriously the question of German guilt. Jaspers would soon publish *The Burden of*

³⁴ Maritain to Simon, January 29, 1945, in *Cahiers Jacques Maritain 4 bis*: 17-18.

³⁵ Tardini extracted, via the new nuncio in Paris, Monsignor Angelo Roncalli (the future Pope John XXIII), de Gaulle's confidential assurance that in good time a less "political" ambassador would replace Maritain. See in particular the January 13, 1945 letter from Angelo Roncalli to Domenico Tardini, the January 18 letter from Tardini to Roncalli, and the January 29 letter from Roncalli to Tardini in *Actes et Documents du Saint Siège Relatifs à la Seconde Guerre Mondiale, Volume 11, La Saint Siège et la Guerre Mondiale, Janvier 1944-Mai 1945*, eds. Pierre Blet, Robert A. Graham, Angelo Martini, and Burkhardt Schneider (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1981), 676, 679, 686. I am grateful to Joel Blatt for assisting with the translation of these letters from the original Italian.

³⁶ Jacques Maritain to Mortimer Adler, August 31, 1945, Maritain Archives, Kolbsheim.

³⁷ Barré, 532.

³⁸ Jacques Maritain, *Three Reformers: Luther, Descartes, Rousseau* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1970), 35.

³⁹ Jacques Maritain, "Ten Months Later," in *Pour la Justice: Articles et Discours (1940-1945)* (New York: Éditions de la Maison Française, 1945), 33.

⁴⁰ Maritain ambassadorial report, December 9, 1945, Maritain Archives, Kolbsheim.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

German Guilt, arguing that all Germans bore some measure of responsibility for Nazi crimes, and that without facing collective guilt, no postwar recovery would be possible. "No other way," Jaspers wrote, "can lead to a regeneration that would renew us from the source of our being."⁴³

Yet Jaspers also offered an argument against simplifying the guilt question that would have made for a sharp rejoinder to Maritain's confidential report, conceding the obviousness of political guilt but questioning more sweeping judgments: "To pronounce a group criminally, morally, or metaphysically guilty is an error akin to the laziness and arrogance of average, uncritical thinking."⁴⁴ Jaspers also would have bristled at Maritain's insistence on Germany being permanently partitioned, either for prophylactic or punitive reasons. Still, the ambassador had written a diplomatic report, not a systematic philosophical study. And whatever his history of anti-Germanism, increasingly his critical scrutiny focused not on the German people but on the Catholic hierarchy. He looked back with dismay on the German bishops who, meeting at Fulda in August 1945, had "recognized that wrongs had been committed by some Germans, but...evaded the question of their collective responsibility." Maritain assured himself and the Quai d'Orsay in May 1946 that the German prelates did not speak for Pope Pius XII: "[S]ilence on such an important point cannot suffice to purify the moral atmosphere, as the Pope himself wishes."⁴⁵ But by 1947, Maritain, appalled at the pro-German and anti-French attitude of the papal envoy in occupied Germany,

⁴³ Karl Jaspers, *The Question of German Guilt*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Capricorn Books, 1961), 28. This book was published in German in 1946 as *Die Schuldfrage*, and first appeared in English translation in 1947.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁴⁵ Charles Molette, "Jacques Maritain et la Conférence de Seelisberg," *Nova et Vetera* 69 (1994): 214.

American Bishop Aloisius Muench,⁴⁶ became less sanguine about Pius' dependability as a moral force behind German regeneration, or a strong voice denouncing the continued dangers of antisemitism. Events outside Germany the year before also proved crucial.

The murder of approximately forty Jews on the fourth of July 1946, in Kielce, Poland, forced Maritain's action. He approached Vatican Undersecretary of State Monsignor Giovanni Battista Montini, a friend and admirer, and the future Pope Paul VI. Montini encouraged Maritain to prepare a memorandum on antisemitism, and as expected, the document referred to antisemitic violence as "not only a crime against justice and natural law...but also a mysterious tragedy." But Maritain also asked for specific action against "the antisemitic psychosis," calling for "a proclamation of the true thought of the Church...a work of enlightenment striking down a cruel and harmful error, [and] also a work of justice and reparation."⁴⁷ The time had come for a papal encyclical denouncing antisemitism.⁴⁸

In a papal audience on July sixteenth, Maritain found his suggestion rebuffed. He could expect no further statement, let alone an encyclical. Why not? The previous November, the

⁴⁶ Michael Phayer, *The Catholic Church and the Holocaust, 1930-1965* (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 2000), 152-155. See also Suzanne Brown-Fleming, *The Holocaust and Catholic Conscience: Cardinal Aloisius Muench and the Guilt Question in Germany* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005).

⁴⁷ Jacques Maritain to Giovanni Battista Montini, July 12, 1946, reprinted in *Cahiers Jacques Maritain* 23 (October 1991), 31-33.

⁴⁸ Regarding the *pre-war* encyclical condemning antisemitism, see Georges Passelcq and Bernard Suchecky, *The Hidden Encyclical of Pius XI*, trans. Steven Rendall (New York: Harvest Books, 1997). The book includes the never-promulgated encyclical, itself weighted with anti-Judaic tropes, in its entirety, and receives useful contextualization in the following: Frank J. Coppa, "The Hidden Encyclical of Pius XI Against Racism and Anti-Semitism Uncovered—Once Again!" *The Catholic Historical Review* 84 (1998): 63-72.

Pope had granted an audience to a group of seventy Jewish camp survivors, and had deplored “the hatred and folly of persecution which, under the influence of erroneous and intolerant doctrines, in opposition to the noble human and authentic Christian spirit, have engulfed incomparable numbers of innocent victims, even among those who took no active part in the war.”⁴⁹ The Pope’s view that these words from late 1945 sufficed to clarify the Catholic Church’s position on hatred and violence toward Jews remained unshaken even by the Kielce massacre, with its sordid background of ritual murder accusations, and its aftermath of near-unanimous silence among the Polish clergy.⁵⁰ The disheartening response Maritain received from the Pope not only closed the issue, at least for the moment, it also set the tone for his own reply three days later to an emergency telegram from the Jewish Labor Committee in New York. While the ambassador agreed that “any revival of antisemitism would be a shame for humanity,” he drew the Jewish Labor Committee’s attention to the publicized remarks the Pope had made in the audience with Jewish refugees in November 1945.⁵¹ Even as he remonstrated in vain with the Pope to better acknowledge and ameliorate the Jews’ continued suffering after 1945, Maritain himself maintained diplomatic circumspection.

Although Maritain concealed his disillusionment with Pius from himself and others, he never hid his desire to leave diplomacy and return to philosophy. Toward the end of what he understood as a three-year term, he received an offer from the president of Princeton to teach moral philosophy there.

⁴⁹ Phayer, 180-82; Frank J. Coppa, *The Papacy, the Jews, and the Holocaust* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2006), 212.

⁵⁰ Jan Gross, *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz* (New York: Random House, 2006), 152-3.

⁵¹ Telegram, Jacques Maritain to Jewish Labor Committee, July 19, 1946, RG-67.001M Reel 7, Jewish Labor Committee Records, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives.

Despairing of ever receiving a coveted appointment to the *Collège de France*, Maritain accepted, explaining to Simon that it was “high time to return to my vocation of philosopher.”⁵² Since the time of Kielce, Maritain arguably had sought to act in the stead of a pope too preoccupied with political and diplomatic considerations, particularly those stemming from the emerging Cold War,⁵³ to finally, belatedly offer a categorical rejection of antisemitism on behalf of the Catholic Church. During 1947, France’s ambassador to the Vatican petitioned for the amendment if not suppression of the Good Friday prayer *Pro perfidis Judaeis*,⁵⁴ prepared a statement for the July thirtieth opening of the International Emergency Conference on Antisemitism at Seelisberg, Switzerland, and headed the French delegation to the UNESCO conference in Mexico City in November 1947 that helped create the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In Mexico, Maritain cited recent atrocities that refuted moral indifferentism in politics: “Given the crimes against humanity committed by Nazi Germany, it grabs us by the throat: it is good that people not leave themselves in perplexity on the subject.”⁵⁵

⁵² Barré, 532.

⁵³ Peter Kent, in his study of Pius XII and the politics of the Cold War, offers a balanced judgment on Maritain’s departure from the Vatican embassy in part by taking into account the offer of a professorship at Princeton: “It was perhaps fitting that Jacques Maritain resigned his ambassadorial post to accept a position at Princeton University; the climate at the Vatican was becoming less sympathetic to his personal outlook and values.” *The Lonely Cold War of Pope Pius XII: The Roman Catholic Church and the Division of Europe, 1943-1950* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002), 202.

⁵⁴ See in particular the April 12, 1948 memorandum from Maritain to Montini reprinted in Philippe Chenaux, *Paul VI et Maritain: Les rapports du “Montinisme” et du “Maritanisme”* (Rome: Edizioni Studium, 1994), 104-07; Yves Chevalier, “Le combat de Jacques Maritain contre l’antisémitisme,” *Sens* 8 (2004): 419-40.

⁵⁵ Jacques Maritain, “La Voix de la Paix,” in *Oeuvres Complètes, Volume IX* (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires, 1990), 153.

Maritain departed Rome in May 1948 after what he described as a “warm and memorable” final audience with Pius,⁵⁶ despite recent scholarly assertions that he resigned his post in protest,⁵⁷ claims that make of Maritain an unrealistically heroic figure with unambiguous philosemitic credentials. In truth, Maritain’s own silence or discretion regarding Pius XII has already been seen. This reticence to criticize Pius was not necessarily shared by all French Catholics, even rather conservative ones such as Paul Claudel, who in a letter to Maritain in 1945 complained of the rather “feeble and vague moans” that the Vatican had offered as a response to “the Jewish children massacred by the Nazis.”⁵⁸ More publicly, Maritain’s close friend François Mauriac, writing in *Figaro* in February 1948, wondered whether anyone in the Vatican had shown the same kind of moral authority during the war that the recently-slain Mahatma Gandhi had displayed. What if someone, “on one of the hills of the Eternal City, had refused to eat or drink?”⁵⁹ Maritain never

⁵⁶ *Journet-Maritain Correspondance*, III, 628n.

⁵⁷ “Catholic historian Michael Phayer has criticized Pius XII’s posture during this period, basing his criticisms in part on the archives of Jacques Maritain, the eminent French Catholic philosopher, who resigned his post as French Ambassador to the Vatican in protest over Pius’ immediate post-war stance on German Catholic guilt.” John T. Pawlikowski, “The Canonization of Pope Pius XII,” in Rittner, *et al.*, 222. Phayer himself puts it somewhat less dramatically: “Realizing that his arguments for a papal-led spiritual reawakening in Europe in Europe would come to naught, Jacques Maritain resigned his ambassadorship in 1948.” Phayer, 182. See also Coppa, *Papacy*, 213. The only near-contemporary account regarding Maritain’s differences with Pius is the retrospective, posthumously-published reminiscences of Aryeh L. Kubovy (Leon Kubowitzky): “[In 1949] I heard that Maritain had been conducting a courageous fight on behalf of the encyclical, but that the conservative elements in the Curia had won the upper hand. In spite of many attempts on my part I have not yet succeeded in obtaining any details about the course of this internal political struggle.” “The Silence of Pope Pius XII and the Beginnings of the ‘Jewish Document.’” *Yad Vashem Studies on the European Jewish Catastrophe and Resistance* 6 (1967), 25.

⁵⁸ “Une lettre de Paul Claudel à Jacques Maritain,” in *Bulletin de la Société Paul Claudel* 143 (3e trimestre) (1996), 1-2.

⁵⁹ *Journet-Maritain Correspondance* III, 922.

engaged in this kind of direct criticism of Pius XII, though he confessed to his friend Journet that he felt a “heart-rending ambivalence” toward the Holy Father.⁶⁰ Maritain’s true feelings regarding the Pope thus offer less of a contribution to an irenic historiography than a reminder of the complexity of Catholic philosemitism.⁶¹

The Future of Christian-Jewish Relations

Maritain’s postwar approach to the Jewish Question embraced issues that affected both Christians and Jews: the persistence of antisemitism within the Christian conscience, the controversial question of whether antisemitism was extrinsic or intrinsic to historical Christianity, an appraisal of the Catholic Church’s new attitude toward Jews represented by *Nostra Aetate*, and the realization of Zionist dreams in the fledgling state of Israel. These were new issues in the late-1940s and early 1950s, and for virtually all parties concerned, mediated through something other than a fully-developed “Holocaust consciousness,” which only materialized in the 1960s and 1970s after Europe had risen “from the house of the dead.”⁶²

⁶⁰ *Journet-Maritain Correspondance* III, 622. See also Michael R. Marrus, “The Ambassador and the Pope: Pius XII, Jacques Maritain, and the Jews,” *Commonweal* 131(18) (October 22, 2004), 14-18. Regarding Maritain’s relationship with Pius XII, Marrus emphasizes the “supersessionist theological context that was, at the time, inescapably associated with any Vatican-level discussion of the Jews,” and which required the linkage of “any declaration about the Jews with an assertion of Catholic rectitude and universal spiritual hegemony.” Michael R. Marrus, “A Plea Unanswered: Jacques Maritain, Pope Pius XII, and the Holocaust,” *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 21 (2005): 10.

⁶¹ To the extent that Pius XII had remained silent during the Holocaust, Maritain insisted that the pope’s motives were unimpeachable, as seen for example in “Lettre de Jacques Maritain à André Chouraqui (1969),” *Notes et Documents* 11 (May-September 2008): 33.

⁶² Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 803-34.

The remarks quoted toward the beginning of this essay, describing antisemitism as a life and death problem for Christians, came from Maritain's letter to the Seelisberg Conference, held between late July and early August 1947. Maritain, still ambassador to the Vatican, could not attend this meeting of more than sixty-five Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, and Jewish clergy, but his message was read at the beginning of the conference.⁶³ Maritain's views on the Jewish Question now contained a far more prescriptive substance than they had before the war, demanding "practical measures." The Seelisberg Conference had been called to transform the attitudes of Gentiles, not Jews, and Maritain's concrete suggestions aimed themselves at Christians, who needed to change their attitudes in three key ways. First, they needed to recognize that the self-debasement of perpetrators constituted the ultimate spiritual tragedy of antisemitism. Second, they needed to confront the fact that antisemitism had not abated in 1945, and that Christians had no grounds for self-congratulation. Third, given the failure of the modern project of assimilation, Christians needed to see a Jewish state in Palestine as inevitable, as provoking increased antisemitism, and as understandably attracting Jewish loyalties regardless of whether or not individual Jews chose to emigrate there.⁶⁴

Maritain concluded the letter by demanding that Christians purify their hearts of residual contempt, changing the very language they had unreflectively used to describe Jews throughout history, and making an effort to empathize with Jewish suffering in the Diaspora. Christian love demanded nothing less. Speaking eschatologically, Christians needed to make these changes to "prepare for their part the future reintegration which Paul proclaimed."⁶⁵ Jules Isaac, a respected historian,

textbook author, and former government official who had lost his wife and daughter at Auschwitz, devoted himself to studying the Christian origins of antisemitism, and first coined the phrase "the teaching of contempt."⁶⁶ His response to Maritain's Seelisberg letter was positive and brief, according to the Abbé Journet: "He said, from a Catholic viewpoint of course, everything I am putting forth in a book on which I am working."⁶⁷ Isaac's *Jésus et Israël*, published in 1948, sought to revise a hostile and distorted historical view of Jews and Judaism, and insofar as Maritain has long reminded his fellow Christians of the Jewishness of Jesus, their views coincided. But Maritain strongly disagreed with the kind of judgment, underlined by Isaac in *L'Enseignement du mépris* (1962), that a direct causal continuity existed between traditional anti-Judaism and modern antisemitism. Nor would Isaac, who was not an observant Jew, have found much worth in Maritain's evocation of a common Jewish-Christian spiritual destiny. That the Seelisberg Conference dealt with more tangible, glaring problems such as alleged deicide and the "teaching of contempt," and postponed thorny issues of historical continuity or covenantal theology, therefore seems understandable.⁶⁸

Maritain objected to a historical connection being drawn between anti-Judaism and antisemitism, and defended Pius XII

⁶⁶ See above, note 7.

⁶⁷ *Journet-Maritain Correspondance*, III, 576.

⁶⁸ Instead, Isaac, whose frustration with Vatican policies would abate when he was received with (literally) open arms by Pope John XXIII, clearly appreciated even incremental, relative gains in Christian-Jewish relations, especially those made at the only conference dealing with Christianity and antisemitism in the decade after the war at which Jews were invited participants: "Only in Seelisberg did Christian thinkers submit their thinking to Jewish colleagues for critique. Only in Seelisberg was the starting point a Jewish critique of Christianity, the study paper written by French historian and humanist Jules Isaac, 'The Rectification Necessary in Christian Teachings: Eighteen Points.'" Victoria Barnett, "Seelisberg: An Appreciation," *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 11 (2007), 56.

⁶³ See above, note 5.

⁶⁴ Maritain, "Seelisberg," 226-30.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 230-31.

against intimations of antisemitism. In February 1951, the Romanian-born Léon Poliakov, who became France's most authoritative historian of antisemitism, asked Maritain to write the preface to his book *Bréviaire de l'Haine*.⁶⁹ After reading the manuscript, the latter declined the request, enjoining its author to "demonstrate more objectivity and historical exactitude, and to avoid injuring, in speaking of them in too superficial a manner, those Christians who took the side of the persecuted." Nor did Maritain find even "a shadow of antisemitism in the thought of the Pope."⁷⁰ Mauriac in turn agreed to preface the book, and perhaps Poliakov revised some of the passages Maritain found objectionable, judging by the erstwhile critic's review: "M. Poliakov's book traces with an implacable and sure objectivity the stages of the enterprise of extermination."⁷¹

Maritain admitted that Poliakov's history had moved him deeply, bringing into clarity the last moments of dear friends such as poet Benjamin Fondane, who had perished at Auschwitz. And he refracted some his further comments through a philosemitism that sent different messages to Jewish and Gentile readers. In areas where he questioned Poliakov's identification of Christianity as a causal factor behind the extermination of European Jewry, he avoided direct confrontation with what he saw as interpretive errors and held Christians responsible for them:

"If M. Poliakov, here and there, seems to confound too easily the Church and such and such aspect of the temporal Christian world, we should be in no position to be

⁶⁹ Léon Poliakov, *Bréviaire de la haine: Le troisième Reich et les Juifs* (Paris: Calman-Lévy, 1951). The book appeared in English translation as *Harvest of Hate* in 1954.

⁷⁰ Léon Poliakov, *Mémoires* (Paris: Jacques Grancher Editeur, 1999), 287-88.

⁷¹ Jacques Maritain, review of Poliakov in *Oeuvres Complètes, Volume X* (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires, 1991), 1153.

scandalized. [...] Based on the sole fact that there had been, and that there still is, despite everything, a Christian world, the atrocious implementation of the 'final solution' should not even have been possible."⁷²

But when the Anglican priest James Parkes⁷³ insisted on the inherently Christian roots of antisemitism, Maritain showed less indulgence. Parkes accepted "no break in the genealogical tree between these nonreligious beliefs of modern man and the religious beliefs of their ancestors."⁷⁴ Maritain disagreed with this assertion of continuity, arguing that "medieval antisemitism, nefarious as it was... was essentially impatience with those who prevented by their spiritual obstinacy the advent of God's kingdom on earth. It was *totally different* from racist antisemitism. The latter, nevertheless, may be regarded as an aggravated metamorphosis [sic] and secularization of the former." In short, Parkes could not simply deem antisemitism "a creation of the Christian Church."⁷⁵

Behind the historical argument between Parkes and Maritain lies not only the subsequent theological assertion that "antisemitism is the right hand of Christology,"⁷⁶ but also an

⁷² *Ibid.*, 1159-60.

⁷³ Parkes' first major work is still his most influential: *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue* (London: Soncino Press, 1934). See also *Antisemitism* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1963). Haim Chertok, *He Also Spoke as a Jew: The Life of the Reverend James Parkes* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2006), offers the most extensive, as well as the most idiosyncratically psycho-historical, biography of Parkes to date.

⁷⁴ James Parkes to Robert Mayer, August 19, 1954, Jacques Maritain Center, University of Notre Dame.

⁷⁵ Jacques Maritain to Robert Mayer, November 9, 1954, Maritain Center, University of Notre Dame. I have found no evidence that Maritain and Parkes ever corresponded directly.

⁷⁶ Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Seabury Press, 1974), 116. Ruether's thesis is

ecclesiological impasse. For Maritain and Parkes the very word “Church” meant something different. They both converted to Christianity—be it Anglican or Catholic—in the first decade of the twentieth century, in the very heat of the modernist controversy. Unlike Parkes, a liberal Protestant, Maritain saw the Catholic Church as the mystical body of Christ, as something more than a merely human, fallible institution.⁷⁷ No wonder one scholar brands Maritain a theological conservative, but also questions whether Parkes ultimately believed in anything but human progress.⁷⁸ Maritain himself has been lauded as progressive Catholic, mainly because of his acknowledged role in fostering the Second Vatican Council’s unprecedented openness to the modern world and to dialogue with other religions.

The conciliar document *Nostra Aetate*, influenced by both Maritain and Jules Isaac, redefined the relationship between Catholicism and non-Christian religions, particularly Judaism.⁷⁹ Indeed, this document, which had its roots in John XXIII’s call for an ecumenical council, was originally directed

challenged by Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, “Response to Rosemary Radford Ruether,” in *Auschwitz: Beginning of a New Era?* ed. Eva Fleischner (New York: KTAV, 1977), 103. On page 104, Yerushalmi’s words can be seen as more-or-less identical to those Maritain would have chosen had he been asked to radically condense his position on the origins of modern antisemitism in *On the Church of Christ* (1970): “The slaughter of Jews by the state was not part of the medieval Christian world order. It became possible with the breakdown of that order.” See also Paula Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism* (New York: Doubleday, 2008).

⁷⁷ Crane, 119-21.

⁷⁸ Alan T. Davies, *Antisemitism and the Christian Mind: The Crisis of Conscience after Auschwitz* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 82-84, 141.

⁷⁹ For an expansive look at “*Nostra Aetate*’s tortured genesis” in the context of the Second Vatican Council, and against the backdrop of decolonization, the Cold War, and the shadow of the Holocaust, see Stephen Schloesser, “Against Forgetting: Memory, History, Vatican II,” *Theological Studies* 67 (2006): 275-319.

solely toward the Jewish faith and people.⁸⁰ The broadening of this document’s focus does not concern us here, but rather what Maritain considered the blunting of its salutary impact on Christian-Jewish relations. Though publicly honored by Pope Paul VI—who often referred to Maritain as “my teacher”⁸¹—in the closing ceremony of the Council, he privately seethed at changes made in the 1965 final draft of *Nostra Aetate*. “I have suffered a real wound,” he wrote to Charles, now Cardinal, Journet on October seventh, “in seeing that the words ‘and condemn’ after the word ‘deplore’ (hatred, persecution, manifestations of antisemitism) have been suppressed.”⁸² He traced such excisions not only to conservative influences within the Curia, but also, according to Bernard Doering, to “pressure from the bishops of the Arab states and the political forces behind them.”⁸³

Given the Vatican’s historical opposition to Zionism and reluctance to recognize the state of Israel (until 1993),⁸⁴ Maritain’s long-held Christian Zionism and outspoken support for the Jewish state anticipated later developments in Catholicism, even while demonstrating philosemitic ambiguities. Since the 1920s, Maritain had advocated a Jewish return to Palestine both as a temporal answer to antisemitism and as a prelude to

⁸⁰ Robert A. Graham, “Introduction to the Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (*Nostra Aetate*),” in *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter M. Abbott and Joseph Gallagher (New York: Guild Press, 1966), 656-59.

⁸¹ For a detailed study of the relationship between the pontiff and the philosopher, see Chenu, *Paul VI et Maritain*.

⁸² Letter, Jacques Maritain to Charles Journet, October 7, 1965, excerpted in *Cahiers Jacques Maritain*, 23: 35n.

⁸³ Doering, 165-7, 225.

⁸⁴ Cf. Sergio Minerbi, *The Vatican and Zionism: Conflict in the Holy Land: 1895-1925*, trans. Arnold Schwarz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

fulfilling biblical prophecy.⁸⁵ Writing a postscript to his 1964 book *Le Mystère d'Israël*, he regretted that his failing health precluded visiting Israel, “the sole country to which...it is absolutely, *divinely* certain that a people has a right.”⁸⁶ Insisting that Muslim Arabs display a “resignation to an event testifying to the will of Allah,”⁸⁷ Maritain also rejected Journet’s question of whether the creation of a Jewish state in 1948 differed, at least in method, from the historical waging of “holy war” by Christians and Muslims. The difference, Maritain explained, lay in the teleological significance of the event, related both to Jewish existence and to covenantal reintegration:

“What the surrounding peoples are being asked to recognize is not at all a conquest in the name of holy war or in the name of a messianic mission, it is establishing something *in order to exist*...Should not a Christian see in the return of the Jews to the Promised Land a *preamble*, as far off as it might be, to the final reintegration?”⁸⁸

Jewish observers of Christian Zionism have long looked anxiously, if not with hostility, at such sentiments, seeing in them another sinister answer to the Jewish Question, entailing

⁸⁵ Crane, 20-21. Perhaps his Christian Zionism began before 1914, based on his close friendship with Avshalom Feinberg, an ardent Zionist and a native of Ottoman Palestine, who died during the Great War on an espionage mission for the British. Renée Neher-Bernheim, *Éclats d'une Amitié: Avshalom Feinberg et Jacques Maritain* (Paris: Éditions Parole et Silence, 2005).

⁸⁶ Jacques Maritain, “Post-scriptum,” in *Le Mystère d'Israël*, 243.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 244-45.

⁸⁸ Letter, Charles Journet to Jacques Maritain, October 22, 1965, reprinted in *Cahiers Jacques Maritain*, 23 (October 1991): 33-35; Maritain to Journet, October 27, 1965, reprinted in *Ibid.*: 36-38.

the disappearance, if not of Jews, at least of Judaism.⁸⁹ One cannot ignore such concerns, but in the case of Maritain they drastically oversimplify one Christian’s anguished love for Jews. Maritain’s philosemitism, along with other aspects of his adult persona, cannot be understood without reference to the centrality of his own conversion, which as he put it, left him “a man whom God has turned inside out, like a glove.”⁹⁰ He shared with Raïssa a lifelong sense of continual conversion. Neither Jacques nor Raïssa believed that she had ceased to be a Jew, or in a larger sense, that God had ever abrogated the covenant with Israel.⁹¹ In 1961, Maritain, now in retirement at a monastery outside of Toulouse, traveled to New York to receive the Edith Stein Prize, which he shared with his recently-deceased wife, to whom he believed he owed “everything good in life,” and who had the “double privilege” of being born a Jew and baptized as a Christian.⁹²

He also confided to his journal how he envied this double privilege, having spent decades with Raïssa and Véra: “I feel myself a debtor to Israel...I would like to be as little as possible a *goïsche kop*; I would like to be a Jew by adoption, since I have been introduced by baptism into the dignity of the children of Israel.”⁹³ Writing in 1967 to a young woman who had converted from Judaism to Catholicism, he testified to this sanctified envy while affirming her feelings of being uprooted:

⁸⁹ For a comprehensive, balanced study of Christian Zionism, see Shalom Goldman, *Zeal for Zion: Christians, Jews, and the Idea of the Promised Land* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

⁹⁰ Jacques Maritain, *Réponse à Jean Cocteau* (Paris: Librairie Stock, 1926), quoted in Doering, 10.

⁹¹ Crane, 122-23.

⁹² Jacques Maritain, “At the Edith Stein Guild,” *Oeuvres Complètes, Volume XII* (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires, 1992), 1212.

⁹³ Jacques Maritain, *Notebooks*, trans. Joseph W. Evans (Albany, NY: Magi Books, 1984), 4.

“You must bless this condition, not bemoan it, it *obligates* you to march toward sanctity, in the footsteps of Saint Paul, and toward the love of this Cross by which man became co-redemptor with Jesus: for the salvation of the world and the accomplishment of Israel.”⁹⁴ For all the ambivalence in his philosemitism, Maritain’s Jewish Question answered itself in accomplishment rather than extinction.

Conclusion

Jacques Maritain viewed the Jewish Question through the perspective of Catholic philosemitism. His advocacy for Jews and admiration of Judaism comprised more than mere opposition to antisemitism, viewing Jewish identity within the framework of Christian salvation history. The conclusion that both antisemites and philosemites tend to make of Jews an essential type, what Zygmunt Bauman calls allo-Semitism,⁹⁵ can apply to Maritain, who sanctified rather than contradicted stereotypes about Jewish subversion or Gentile resentment of Jewish distinctiveness. His prominent role in fostering Christian-Jewish dialogue after 1945, and in inspiring the Catholic Church to repudiate the deicide charge against Jews, added to his already positive image as a philosemite.

But good deeds can be mythologized, as with the apocryphal portrait of Maritain as a courageous opponent of Pope Pius XII who resigned his post as French ambassador to the Vatican in protest over the pontiff’s alleged continued silence about the Holocaust. In truth, Maritain felt a “heart-rending ambivalence” toward Pius, despite a frustration at the Pope’s

⁹⁴ Jacques Maritain, “Lettre à un Juif Chrétien (1967),” *Cahiers Jacques Maritain* 23 (1991): 41-42.

⁹⁵ See Zygmunt Bauman, “Allo-Semitism: premodern, modern, and postmodern,” in Bryan Cheyette and Laura Marcus (eds.), *Modernity, Culture, and “The Jew”* (New York: Polity Press, 1998), 143-56.

unwillingness to issue an encyclical against antisemitism, and an annoyance at his “sympathy and indulgence...in regard to the German people.”⁹⁶ This non-event contradicts the historical record. Its invocation also risks overestimating the level of Holocaust consciousness among Christians and Jews right after the war, and underestimating the weighty theological issues in Christian-Jewish relations that have only slowly been addressed since. Maritain was neither a systematic theologian who fully engaged the problem of Christian supersessionism, nor was he a historian who could hope to settle once and for all the question of whether traditional anti-Judaism directly caused modern antisemitism.

One should not deemphasize such theological or theological-historical questions, but we also should resituate Maritain within the history of twentieth-century French Catholicism. It is worth asking to what extent Maritain’s philosemitism, embracing an interdependence of Christians and Jews in the economy of salvation, was accentuated by an appraisal of France as a post-Christian society and culture.⁹⁷ Aside from this philosopher’s dedication to a re-Christianization of western culture, one can point to Godin and Daniel’s 1943 book *La France. Pays de mission?*⁹⁸ In any case, Maritain’s influence in French Catholicism after the war waned. He had long been absent from France, and soon new currents would appear within Catholic scholarship, such as the historically-inclined

⁹⁶ Maritain’s final ambassadorial report, in which he gives vent to his annoyance at Pius’ apparent pro-German bias, is reprinted in *Cahiers Jacques Maritain 4 bis*: 91-96.

⁹⁷ I am grateful to Oscar Cole-Arnal for raising this question.

⁹⁸ Jacques Maritain, *Humanisme Intégral: Problèmes temporels et spirituels d’une nouvelle chrétienté* (Paris: Éditions Montaigne, 1936); Henri Godin and Yvan Daniel, *La France. Pays de mission?* (Paris: Cerf, 1943).

ressourcement that pursued theological inquiry outside the putative confines of Thomism.⁹⁹

As recent studies have shown, an appreciation of the historical significance of the Holocaust as a distinctly Jewish catastrophe only gradually permeated French cultural discourse.¹⁰⁰ Maritain's own apocalyptic interpretation of antisemitism soon found itself superseded by more philosophically current interpretations such as the existentialist portrait of the antisemite advanced by Jean-Paul Sartre.¹⁰¹ But he, like Sartre at a later point in his life, developed an approach to the Jewish Question that involved more than simply constructing an uninformed picture of Jews and Judaism that served the larger purpose of illustrating a theory, doctrine, or ideology.¹⁰² Jacques Maritain believed that without a Jewish presence in the world, not only would Christianity past, present, or future not exist, but the burdens of history, evil, and human separation from God would be unbearable.¹⁰³ And so the question of future

Jewish existence, both historically and eschatologically, was for him a life and death question inseparable from his search for sainthood.

⁹⁹ Barré, 518-88. See also Jacques Maritain, *Le Paysan de la Garonne*. Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1966, in which he identified a "frenzied modernism" after Vatican II, much of it attributable to the influence of Pierre Teilhard du Chardin, one of the theologians and philosophers associated with the *nouvelle théologie*. On this once suppressed and ultimately influential movement within Catholic theology, see Jürgen Mettepenningen, *Nouvelle Théologie—New Theology: Inheritor of Modernism, Precursor of Vatican II* (London: T & T Clark, 2010).

¹⁰⁰ See Moyn, *A Holocaust Controversy*, and Joan B. Wolf, *Harnessing the Holocaust: The Politics of Memory in Postwar France* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004).

¹⁰¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, trans. George L. Becker (New York: Schocken Books, 1948). The book originally appeared as *Réflexions sur la Question Juive* in 1946.

¹⁰² Jonathan Judaken, *Jean-Paul Sartre and the Jewish Question: Anti-antisemitism and the Politics of the French Intellectual* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 208-39.

¹⁰³ See Jacques Maritain, *On the Philosophy of History*, trans. Joseph W. Evans (New York: Scribner's, 1957); and *God and the Permission of Evil*,

trans. Joseph W. Evans (Milwaukee, WI: Bruce, 1966). These post-Holocaust works highlight Maritain's need, not unlike Hegel's, to find meaning and purpose in modern history. I thank Stephen Schloesser for this insight.